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ABSTRACT

This study investigated several aspects of early retirement (prior to age 65) as reported by a selected group of Colorado educators from two large districts, one using the state system and the other its own local system of early retirement. Early retirees from these districts were surveyed by means of a three-part questionnaire: part 1 gathererd demographic data on the respondents; part 2 consisted of five multiple-choice questions; and part 3 consisted of three open-ended questions. Findings are reported for each question of parts 2 and 3, with accompanying tables showing distribution of responses. Preliminary analysis of the data suggested nine implications: (1) early retirees are generally pleased with their decision; (2) special incentives for early retirement are likely to succeed; (3) recent changes in schools have increased the likelihood of early retirement; (4) educators are likely to find productive and satisfying uses of retirement opportunities; (5) early retiring educators share concerns of most retirees about financial problems and adjustment difficulties; (6) district preretirement programs should be expanded; (7) building-level efforts to show appreciation for long service are effective; (8) early planning and assistance are essential for early retirement decisions; and (9) different groups within the district should contribute to those considering early retirement. (TE)

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BENEFITS AND PROBLEMS OF EARLY RETIREMENT FOR TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS

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INTRODUCTION

Early retirement for educators has become a topic of increased interest among teachers, administrators and school board members. On one hand, many school people have begun to look at possible rewards which may result from early retirement (before age 65) and, on the other hand, school officials have sought budget benefits for the district through efforts to encourage teachers to take early retirement.

At this point it is apparent that considerable more research and study is needed to provide answers to key questions in the minds of teachers and school administrators. This study was planned to offer some contributions to the problem by studying perceptions of educators who have actually taken early retirement.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study investigated several aspects of early retirement (prior to age 65) as reported by a selected group of Colorado educators.

PRELIMINARY STUDY

A preliminary study of early retirement programs in the Denver area school districts was conducted. Twelve districts were identified which had early retirement programs. The minimum age for retirement varied from 50 to 60 with the mean age being 55. Several districts were working with a maximum retirement age of 70, but most of the districts were using 65. The minimum years of service for retirement varied from 10 to 20 with the mean number of years being 14.7 years. Special features found in some of the plans were: bonus payments for early retirement, payment of accumulated sick leave, health and/or life insurance payments paid by district after early retirement to age 65, survivor benefit plan, annuity plan and part-time work plan.

Two of the larger Colorado districts were selected for study, and early retirees from these two districts were surveyed. These two districts had somewhat different policies for early retirement. District A was part of the state retirement system and District B had its own teacher retirement system.

District A had the following policy:

1. A one-time payment ranging from 65% at age 55 to 0% at age 70 would be paid on the final annual salary at the time of retirement.
2. The employee must be 55 years of age or older and actively employed by the district on a full-time basis.
3. The employee must have a minimum of 15 years of uninterrupted full-time service in the district immediately prior to early retirement.
4. Employees under this early retirement plan are to be reimbursed for their unused sick leave days.
5. Should the employee elect early retirement, early retirement payments and payments for accumulated unused sick leave will be made in one, two, three, four, or five annual installments.
6. The employee may direct that the district purchase an annuity in his name. The participant will receive in total the payment percentage benefit according to his age on the effective date of retirement.
7. Upon retirement, the employee may continue the group health insurance coverage at the employee's expense.

8. Any employee electing early retirement may continue family dependent medical coverage at the employee's expense.
9. In the event of the employee's death prior to having received full retirement payment and/or sick leave reimbursement, the employee's designate beneficiary will receive the remaining balance.
10. Any employee electing early retirement relinquishes all future employment rights in the district.
11. Retired employees interested in part-time employment must make application in writing to the Director of Personnel.

District B's policies were as stated below. These have recently been revised to more closely match those of other districts in the Denver Area.

1. The employee must be 55 years of age or older and actively employed for 25 years, of which employment 15 years must have been with the district.
2. If the employee had had at least five years of service, he may retire at any time because of a disability.
3. The retirement allowance is determined by years of service. At 55 years of age with 25 years of service, the employee may retire with an income equal to 50% of the average of the highest five years of salary.
4. There are provisions for survivor benefits.
5. The employee may receive part-time work in the district after retirement.

In District B, at the time the participants retired, there were no provisions for bonus payments, for early retirement payment for accumulated sick leave, health and life insurance payments by district, or annuity plan.

RELATED RESEARCH

Early retirement plans and how they can save school districts money have been a popular topic in recent years for educational journals. A review of publications for the last several years provides some good examples. Trainor (1978), Koehler (1975) and Crowe (1980) all reflected the themes of saving money, saving young teachers' jobs and allowing some teachers an early exit. The question of the minimum number of years of service, minimum age, incentive pay through hiring retirees as consultants, paying medical insurance until age 65, paying for an annuity and cash for accumulated sick leave are all suggested provisions.

Two recent studies reported in the Journal of Educational Finance were particularly interesting. Wood (1982) stated that the plans are aimed at saving money by retiring an expensive older teacher and replacing with a less expensive younger teacher. While the overall trend is for workers to work beyond age 65, those industries which have introduced early retirement plans have lowered their average age at retirement.

Wood pointed out that too generous early retirement benefits may be economically unrealistic. It could disrupt the actuarial integrity of the regular retirement program. Also, there have been some negative legal rulings. A California court found it violated the Age Discrimination Law to pay bonuses for early retirement. Hence, early retiring workers must be hired back as consultants to collect incentive pay.

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Finally, Wood reported that two doctoral dissertations on cost analysis of early retirement plans found that in Indiana and California the plans probably would not prove to be cost effective on a long-range basis. (Wagner, 1976 and Montgomery, 1970)

Johnson and Gaetino did a study of teachers' attitudes toward early retirement. In this survey in Pennsylvania, data indicated that teachers supported the idea of an early retirement plan. The individual job satisfaction impacted the attitude of the individual toward early retirement. Those who wanted to retire early were looking to leisure time interests or a second career.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

A three-part questionnaire was used to gather the data reported in this paper. Part I of the survey was used to gather demographic data in the following areas:

- age at retirement
- current age
- number of years retired
- sex
- school district
- position held at retirement
- years in education

Part II of the survey consisted of five questions (A through E):

A. What school district conditions, if any, prompted your decision to retire prior to age 65?
B. What personal conditions, if any, prompted your decision to retire prior to age 65?
C. What problems, if any, have resulted from your retirement prior to age 65?
D. What satisfactions and/or benefits, if any, resulted from your retirement prior to age 65?
E. What assistance was provided for persons who retired prior to age 65?

Several possible options were listed under each of the five questions and the respondents were asked to check as many responses as were applicable to their situation. (A complete list of the response choices is presented in Tables 2 through 6.)

Part III of the survey consisted of three open-ended questions:

A. What type of retirement assistance should have been provided that was not involved? By whom? (Please be specific)

B. Did the district from which you retired demonstrate an appreciation for your service? How? (Please be specific)

C. Would you recommend to others that they retire early? At what age? Why?

The completed instrument was administered to a pilot group of 20 teachers. Based on the pilot study, minor changes were made and a cover letter, explaining the nature of the research as well as giving assurance of anonymity, was added. The survey was then sent to 225 teachers and administrators (125 from District B and 100 from District A). One hundred-eighteen usable surveys were returned (79 from District B, 39 from District A). A breakdown of the respondents based on sex and job assignment provides the following profile of the group (see Table I).

TABLE I

Breakdown of respondents by Sex and Position Held at Retirement for Districts A and B and the Total Group. (Expressed as percentages)

	District A (%)	District B (%)	Total (%)
Sex			
Female	63	41	48
Male	37	59	52
	100	100	100
Position			
Elementary Teacher	46	31	36
Middle Level Teacher	18	14	15
Senior High Teacher	23	25	24
School Bldg. Administrator	3	10	8
Central Office Administrator	3	9	7
Other	7	11	10
	100	100	100

A further inspection of the demographics revealed the following information: (all numbers are expressed as medians) age 61; age at retirement 59; years in education 31; number of years retired 1.7.

Overall, the respondent group appeared to be representative of the population in question, even though a large percentage of the returns from District B came from females. (See Table I.)

FINDINGS

The data will be analyzed and reported by section. Each of the questions from Parts II and III of the survey will be dealt with separately.

II.A. "What school conditions, if any, prompted your decision to retire?"

Responses to this question are tabulated and displayed in Table 2. Taken as a total group, the responses are rather evenly spread among the various options. There are, however, some distinct differences between the responses from the respondents when grouped by school district. The cash bonus that is available to early retirees from District A seemed to be a common factor in that group's considerations. Retirees from District B, on the other hand, mentioned poor leadership and discipline problems as common contributors to their retirement decision.

TABLE 2

Responses to Question II.A
(Expressed as percentages)*

	District A (%)	District B (%)	Total (%)
Inability to effect change	21	28	25
A recent increase in retirement fringe benefits	28	23	25
Increased retirement pension	21	23	22
Conflict with colleagues	0	4	3
A cash bonus for early retirees	56	6	23
Student discipline problems	18	46	36
Poor leadership at the building level	15	34	28
Poor leadership at the central office level	21	39	33
Declining enrollment	8	11	10
Other	41	41	41

*Respondents were instructed to check as many as applicable.

Further analysis of the data was carried out using both the Chi-square and ANOVA statistical tests. The statistically significant ($a \leq .05$) findings from those analyses are listed below.

1. Those who chose "increased benefits" or "cash bonus" as responses to question II.A tended to come from the group that had been retired for 1 year or less.
2. Those who listed "poor central leadership" as a response to question II.A tended to be the younger males in the sample group.
3. Elementary and middle level teachers tended to choose "discipline problems" and "poor building leadership" as responses to question II.A more frequently than the other groups of respondents.
4. Those participants who would recommend early retirement to others tended to select more response options for question II.A than those who would not recommend early retirement.

Written Comments For Question II.A.

Respondents in this study were provided an opportunity to report their own school district conditions which prompted their decision to retire prior to age 65. The last response option to this question, designated "other," requested survey participants to "please specify." In excess of 60 comments were recorded for this item. Several statements were made to further explain and justify why certain of the items had been checked. Others, however, identified conditions not addressed by the response options. The following comments are representative of the negative school conditions affecting retirement prior to age 65:

- "transferred from senior high to junior high due to declining enrollment in major subjects"
- "...stress"
- "added another job"
- "court's mandating changing conditions in schools which did not improve school climate"
- "reluctant learners, poor home training"
- "reverse discrimination"
- "not enough emphasis on basics and too much on frills"
- "too many students in one room"
- "too many meetings"
- "being held accountable for all ills of education and children"
- "...teachers association transfer policy"
- "ridiculous and redundant paper work"

The written responses which referred to district sponsored incentives for retirement prior to age 65 focused on an annuity plan or cash bonus based on unused sick leave days. The district incentives, however, solicited significantly fewer comments than the negative school conditions. The discrepancy between the number of comments about incentives and negative comments regarding school conditions may be attributable to: (1) a larger number of surveys being returned from District B, and (2) District B providing fewer incentives for retirement prior to this study.

II.B. "What personal conditions, if any, prompted your decision to retire prior to age 65?"

Responses to this question are tabulated and displayed in Table 3. Excluding the "other" choice, "disillusionment with education" and "tired of working" were the most frequently selected options for both school district groups. Differences between the two districts are seen in the responses to two of the conditions listed in Table 3.

Respondents from District B tended to choose "failing health" more often than their counterparts in District A. Respondents from District A, on the other hand, tended to choose "decision to pursue a different career" more frequently than retirees from District B.

TABLE 3

Responses to Question II.B
(Expressed as percentages)*

	District A (%)	District B (%)	Total (%)
Failing health	8	27	20
Failing health of family member	3	7	6
Change in family situation	10	10	10
Decision to pursue a different career	21	9	13
Disillusionment with education	31	38	36
Financial conditions not related to education	10	10	10
Minimal difference in take home pay between working and retirement	18	14	15
Tired of working	33	32	32
Other	36	37	36

*Respondents were instructed to check as many as applicable.

Further analysis of the data revealed the following statistically significant ($a < .05$) finding.

1. Those who recommended retirement before 60 years of age also tended to choose "disillusionment with education" as a response to question II.B more frequently than those who recommended retirement after age 60.
2. Those who retired at a younger age (before 60) tended to choose "decision to pursue a different career" as a response to Question II.B more frequently than those who retired after their 60th birthday.
3. Those who had been retired for 4 years or more tended to choose "failing health" as a response to question II.B more frequently than those who had been retired for less than 4 years.

Written Comments for Question II.B.

The second question in Part II of the survey provided respondents with two opportunities to supply specific personal conditions for retirement prior to age 65. Again, more than 60 survey participants chose to identify their reasons for early retirement.

The first written response opportunity followed the item "change in family situation (please describe)." The corresponding retirement of a spouse and the need to retire prior to a certain year in order to obtain the social security benefits of a deceased spouse are representative of the few comments made to this item.

The "other" item was the second opportunity for participants to identify specific personal conditions which prompted them to retire prior to age 65. Several respondents identified specific health or health related conditions including depression, hearing impairment, stress, and burnout. The latter may also be related to the response item "tired of working."

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A number of respondents explained specific frustrations with education. Included in this category were comments about court orders, inservice education, long hours of school work outside the school day, lack of teacher control, and standards for teacher and administrative certification. However, several respondents identified the pursuit of leisure time activities as reasons for early retirement. Among those activities listed were: travel, writing, hobbies and sports.

II. C. "What problems, if any, have resulted from your retirement prior to age 65?"

Responses for this question are tabulated and reported in Table 4.

Overall, the major problem for the total group seems to be "financial." Respondents from District B tended to choose "emotional" problems and "health problems" more frequently than retirees from District A.

TABLE 4

Responses to Question II.C
(Expressed as percentages)*

	District A (%)	District B (%)	Total (%)
Financial	26	18	20
Emotional (boredom, restlessness, feeling of unproductiveness)	10	18	15
Family problems	0	1	1
Health problems	0	5	3
Lack of contact with fellow professionals	15	15	15
Other	31	18	22

*Respondents were instructed to check as many as applicable.

Further analysis of the data revealed the following statistically significant ($\alpha \leq .05$) findings.

1. Those who retired at an earlier age (less than 60) tended to choose the "financial" response for question II.C more frequently than those who retired after the age of 60.
2. Those recommending early retirement to others tended to choose "emotional" problems as a response to question II.C more frequently than those who did not recommend early retirement.
3. Those who would not recommend early retirement to others tended to select more response options for question II.C than those who would recommend early retirement to other educators.

Written Comments for Question II.C.

When respondents were asked to identify specific problems which have resulted from retirement prior to age 65, their overwhelming response was "None." Some comments did, however, relate to the "financial" item and others identified "lack of contact with children" as a problem.

II.D. "What satisfaction and/or benefits, if any, resulted from your retirement prior to age 65?"

Responses to this question are tabulated and displayed in Table 5. The two most commonly selected options for the total group were "opportunity to pursue leisure-time activities" and "escape from stress." Respondents from District B indicated a greater inclination to work part-time ("in" and "outside" of education) than the respondents from District A, while early retirees from District B chose "improved health" as a benefit more frequently than retirees from District A.

TABLE 5

Responses to Question II.D
(Expressed as percentages)*

	District A (%)	District B (%)	Total (%)
Opportunity to pursue second career	23	19	20
Improved health	18	43	35
Opportunity to pursue leisure-time activities	80	77	78
Opportunity to travel	56	66	63
Improved family relationships	21	15	17
Escape from stress	64	76	72
Opportunity to be in charge of my life	49	41	43
Opportunity to work part-time in education	26	11	16
Opportunity to work part-time outside of education	41	28	32

*Respondents were instructed to check as many as applicable.

Further analysis of the data revealed the following statistically significant ($a \leq .05$) findings:

1. The younger retirees in the sample (under 60 years of age) tended to choose the "opportunity to pursue second career" option more frequently than the older retirees (over 60 years of age).
2. The senior high school retirees in the sample also tended to choose the "opportunity to pursue second career" option more frequently than retirees from other positions.
3. The women in the respondent group tended to choose the "opportunity to pursue leisure-time activities" option more frequently than the men in the group.
4. Elementary teachers and school building administrators tended to select the "improved health" option more frequently than retirees from other positions.
5. Those who recommended early retirement to others tended to select more response options for question II.D than those who would not recommend early retirement.

Written Comments for Question II.D.

When requested to specify an "opportunity to work part-time outside of education," less than 30 participants responded. Those responses were extremely varied, but the part-time work in several cases was volunteer work.

II.E. "What assistance was provided for persons who retired prior to age 65?"

Responses to this question are tabulated and displayed in Table 6. The overall responses to the options under this question were quite low in comparison to the first four questions. The most commonly selected options were: "detailed explanation of retirement options," "money management counseling," and "information regarding retired employee associations." As one would expect, District B retirees tended to get help from the district and from their professional association while retirees from District A received their help from the state retirement system as well as the district and professional associations.

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TABLE 6

Responses to Question II.E
(Expressed as percentages)*

	District A (%)	District B (%)	Total (%)
Money management counseling by:			
School district	5	19	14
PERA (State System)	10	1	4
Professional Association	5	10	9
Other	5	7	7
Counseling regarding potential emotional problems by:			
School district	0	10	7
PERA (State System)	0	0	0
Professional Association	0	0	0
Other	0	4	3
Information regarding retired employee associations by:			
School district	10	16	14
PERA (State System)	26	1	9
Professional Association	26	15	19
Other	5	7	7
Detailed explanation of retirement options by:			
School District	51	84	74
PERA (State System)	54	4	20
Professional Association	3	4	3
Other	0	3	2
Information regarding second careers by:			
School District	0	5	3
PERA (State System)	0	0	0
Professional Association	0	0	0
Other	3	1	2
Information regarding availability of leisure-time activities by:			
School District	3	7	6
PERA (State System)	0	0	0
Professional Association	3	0	1
Other	5	6	6
Counseling concerning where to live after retirement by:			
School District	0	7	5
PERA (State System)	0	0	0
Professional Association	0	1	1
Other	3	4	3

*Respondents were instructed to check as many as applicable.

Because of the infrequency of response to this question, statistical analysis of the data was inconclusive.

Written Comments for Question II.E.

Each of the seven items which addressed assistance provided for persons who retired prior to age 65 gave respondents an opportunity to indicate "other" assistance they received. Few comments were recorded for any one item. However, several survey participants stated that they did not need nor seek any assistance. Those few respondents who did identify an assistance to the "other" category in item one, "money management counseling," generally stated that they had received counseling from private sources, namely brokers, insurances companies and banks.

Two respondents reported assistance from psychiatrists in replying to item two, "counseling regarding potential emotional problems." Friends and retirement groups provided the most information about retired employee associations according to the responses to item three.

The few people who supplied comments to item four, "detailed explanation of retirement options," indicated that the school district was an acceptable source of information.

The only comment recorded which related to the item, "information regarding second careers," referred to special college classes.

Friends and senior citizen groups were listed among the few sources of "information regarding availability of leisure-time activities." Reading material was identified as an assistance by the few who responded to the last item, "counseling concerning where to live after retirement."

III. A. "What type of retirement assistance should have been provided that was not provided? By whom?"

Opinions of early-retiring school personnel were probed through the use of an open-end question regarding the kinds of retirement help they felt ought to have been provided but was not. Responses ranged widely but with some emphasis observed regarding the need for financial, investment, tax and legal information.

Categories of responses by more than one person are as follows:

Assistance desired but not provided	Number
Financial, investment, money mgt., tax and legal info.	17
Pay for unused sick leave accumulated in district	7
Info. and guidance regarding second career or part time work	6
Continue health/dental group plan	5
Info. regarding retirement options	3
Info. regarding health insurance	3
Leisure/hobby activities	3
General district retirement information program	3
Confer regarding health difficulties	3
Send all district bulletins to retired persons	2
Provide counseling and info. regarding housing and where to live	2

Assistance should be provided by whom?	
District	10
PERA (State retirement plan)	3
Local teachers' association	2

A sample of actual comments which are characteristic of the responses include the following:

"Retirement counseling should start ten years prior to retirement and should include financial counseling, health information, and other kinds of options as alternative housing and locations for retirees." "I think as educated adults we should provide for our own needs in this area." "Provide a number of pre-retirement seminars." "Money management counseling should have been provided by the school district especially concerning tax problems related to bonuses, etc." "The district should provide counseling on the emotional void created by lack of contact with teachers and children." "The main responsibility rests with the individual; nest eggs for retirement come from an early beginning, self discipline and individual study." "The school district should allow retired teachers to continue in the hospital-health group plan. Retired teachers should pay the district's share but should be included." "A prepared package containing information on taxes, continuing medical and dental insurance, investment opportunities, part time work, leisure activities, etc. would have been helpful."

III. B. "Did the district from which you retired demonstrate an appreciation for your service? How?"

Another open-end item dealt with the question of what, if anything, was done to express an appreciation for their long service. Respondents indicated a wide variety of activities provided them to express appreciation; however, individuals also revealed differing reactions to these, ranging from delight to disgust.

Categories of responses by more than one person are as follows:

Kinds of appreciation provided by the district	Number
Letter of appreciation	53
Certificate of service and appreciation	42
Tea/reception	28
Letter from the school board	15
Plaque	10
Ticket to all district school activities	4

Kinds of appreciation provided by the school/building	Number
Building party (tea, breakfast, brunch, lunch, dinner)	42
Building gift	23
Student party to honor retiree	4
Letter from principal	3
Building administrator's compliment	2

Kinds of appreciation provided by the teachers association	Number
Dinner	7
Gift	7
Letter of appreciation	3

Other	Number
PTA/PTO recognition and gift	2

A sample of actual comments which are characteristic of the responses include the following:

"I received a form letter from the district signed by some secretary." "Students honored me at their graduation." "I received retirement gifts I shall always treasure. Some were hand made requiring exceptional skills." "I received a form letter from the board president and one from the superintendent. They didn't express any appreciation for my services while I was teaching so why should they when I retired?" "The faculty and PTO of the building where I taught created a fund with which to buy library books in my name for the school." "They respected my choice of no emotional farewell. Letters and certificates were adequate and sincere." "Several district specialists wrote nice notes of appreciation." "I still get 'red carpet' treatment when I go to the central office." "At the school level I felt my years of service were appreciated. I'm sorry the central administration could have been as much concerned." "Students in my school had a special day for me." "The PTO gave a wine and cheese party and presented each retiree with a matted drawing of the school."

III. C. "Would you recommend to others that they retire early? YES__ NO__
At what age?___ Why?"

The final, open-end item asked early-retirees what they would say to colleagues regarding the decision whether or not to retire early. Although some respondents felt reluctant to make a definite recommendation since each individual is different, a large number wrote in opinions which were insightful and revealing.

Responses to this question may be summarized as follows:

Yes	78
No	11

At what age?	Number
62-64	1
62	9
60-62	1
60	17
58-60	1
55-60	1
57	1
56	2
55	14
22	2
ASAP	4

Why retire early?	Number
Have time to pursue leisure and other interests	19
Too much stress in teaching/burnout	15
Health factors	12
Opportunity to travel	11
Financial condition good	9
Do community volunteer work	7
Other career	7
Be with family and spouse	4
Incompetent/disinterested administrators	3
Lost ability to enjoy young people	3
Retire while I still feel successful	3
Make room for younger teachers	3
People don't care	3
Part-time job	1
The court ruling	1
Bored doing the same thing	1
Job satisfaction	1
Help district with decreasing enrollment problems	1
Larger classes	1
Enjoy retirement while still emotionally and physically healthy	1
Instability of education	1
No longer have psychological need to work full time	1
People have less regard for older teachers	1
Criticism of schools	1
No recommendation since each individual is different	37

Some of the actual responses are quoted to illustrate the kinds of opinions which were expressed by the early-retirees, as follows:

"The pleasure of being able to enjoy travel with husband or wife while in good health is worth an early retirement." "I'd not recommend that a person do so without a great deal of knowledge regarding financial status, health and emotional status. For some it would be a disaster." "Only if they have something meaningful to do with enthusiasm. You should see my house and my greenhouse." "No, if they have no other income and if they have no other health insurance." "There is too much stress in the profession today." "I think students and faculty have less regard for older teachers." "Younger educators might adjust more easily to changes in the system." "There is too much criticism from some parents and not much praise from administrators and parents." "Life after retirement can be very busy and fun." "If one is prepared for retirement and can adjust through hobbies and recreational activities, retirement can extend his/her life span. It has mine." "Those who enjoy teaching, are in good health, and feel their efforts in reaching children are successful should continue teaching." "The earlier one retires, the better one's chances for a second career or part time work, or to travel, or to do community service work."

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TENTATIVE CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The question of early retirement (prior to age 65) has generated increasing interest in recent years on the part of teachers, administrators and school board members and a growing number of school districts have begun to implement early retirement provisions. The researchers sought to make some contribution to the situation through a study of opinions of a sample of educators who had actually taken early retirement. One hundred-eighteen early retirees, from two large school districts, responded to a survey instrument containing eight questions dealing with significant areas of the problem.

Preliminary study and analysis of the data suggest some tentative conclusions and implications as follows:

1. Early retirees generally are pleased with their decision to retire early and would encourage others to follow suit.

2. Special incentives by school organizations are likely to be successful in convincing employees to take early retirement.

3. Less favorable conditions in schools today, the changing nature of education in general, increasing discipline problems and the cumulative effects of years of intense work demands generally have prepared teachers to look favorably upon the possibilities of early retirement.

4. Professional educators are likely to find productive and satisfying uses of retirement opportunities for leisure time activities and travel, reduced stress, part-time work or service outside education and more self-determination in life decisions.

5. Early retiring educators are no different from most retirees in their concern about financial problems and difficulties in adjustment from work to the newly found freedom.

6. District pre-retirement programs are valuable and helpful and ought to be expanded.

7. Building-level efforts to show appreciation for long service are effective and tend to fill the gap in apparent lack of interest displayed by district-level administrators.

8. Early planning and assistance are essential to make the best early-retirement decision.

9. A variety of groups might make contributions to those persons considering early retirement (e.g., school district officials, building administrators, local teachers organization, state teachers association, state retirement system).

The data generated in this study of educators who have actually taken early retirement offer some insights into the possible benefits and liabilities from their point of view. The decision to retire early is not something to be entered into lightly but, on balance, seems to be something which present educators may want to work with school officials to make available to those who may be interested.

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